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Prof.dr. G. Morello

The Hidden Dimensions of Marketing

Valedictory lecture by dr. Gabriele Morello, professor of
Marketing, Faculty of Economics and Econometrics,
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, March 18, 1993

vrije Universiteit *amsterdam*



Prof.dr. G. Morello

The Hidden Dimensions of Marketing

vrije Universiteit amsterdam



Prof. G. Morelle

The History of Marketing



Universiteitsbibliotheek van Amsterdam

FOREWORD

This publication contains the text of the valedictory lecture given by prof.dr. Gabriele Morello in the Aula of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam on March 18, 1993.

The lecture was preceded and followed by speeches of the academic members of the Honorary Committee, composed of prof.dr. C. Datema, Rector Magnificus; drs. H.J. Brinkman, Chairman of the Executive Board; prof.dr. D. Keuning, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Econometrics; dr. Antonello Pietromarchi, Ambassador of Italy in the Netherlands; mrs. Yvonne C.M.T. van Rooy, State Secretary of Economic Affairs in the Netherlands; dr. J.F.A. de Soet, Chairman of the Dutch Institute for Marketing (NIMA). Greetings were also pronounced by prof.dr. D.J. Eppink, Chairman of the Department of Business Administration; dr. G. Bamossy, professor of Marketing; drs. G.H.M. van Bentum on behalf of the students. With different nuances, all speakers acknowledged the work accomplished by prof. Morello in 13 years of teaching and research, and his personal style.

Prof. Morello thanked each speaker for the words of appreciation, and stated that he will always be proud to be Professor Emeritus of the Vrije Universiteit. Thanks were also addressed by him to previous Rector prof. P.J.D. Drenth, and to the Deans and colleagues professors Wytzes, Twijnstra, Linnemann, Visser, Merckies and Cornelis for their cooperation in different occasions. Among the student-assistants, Ewout Overheem and Jeroen de Lange were mentioned, and especially Gabriëlle van Bentum who for five years assisted with intelligence and care in all scientific and organizational projects. Prof. Morello also thanked the staff of the Faculty, with specific mention of Muriel Brummel and Veronica Bruijns for their help at administrative level.

Since many colleagues and friends from abroad were in the audience, prof. Morello gave the lecture in English. In his own introductory words: *"Het heeft lange tijd geduurd alvorens ik in staat was te converseren in het Nederlands. Daarom had ik gedacht dit bijzondere college in deze taal te geven. Maar, gezien het feit dat een aantal vrienden hier aanwezig zijn, die het Nederlands niet beheersen, wil ik deze presentatie toch in het Engels houden. De titel van mijn rede luidt: 'De Verborgene Dimensies van Marketing'."*

THE HIDDEN DIMENSIONS OF MARKETING

Marketing is generally recognized as a mature activity, both in theory and in practice. The literature is overwhelming. In the business world all organizations apply (or claim to apply) marketing principles and tools. Innovation in marketing, however, is seldom of a fundamental nature. Academic debates indulge in epistemological arguments on the scope and boundaries of the discipline. Professionals concentrate on methods and techniques more than on conceptual approaches. Most experts think that the rules of the game are known. Their knowledge is disseminated in seminars, conferences, meetings. Other people question this wisdom. They wonder whether our post-industrial society is not hiding features which have changed the marketing landscape. If this is so, new approaches are required to face new perspectives.

Thirty years ago, Bartels (1962) wrote an article on the dimensions of marketing thought. After having defined dimensions as "means by which objects are measured, described and appraised", he identified six of them: intellectual, temporal, spatial, interdisciplinary, ethical and spiritual. My objective is different. It is neither to assess the criteria on which marketing should be judged, nor to give an overview of the field. I intend to discuss the role of marketing, both at the conceptual and at the operational level, cutting across all the above dimensions. The aim is to unravel the non-obvious factors that underpin contemporary marketing. This means dealing with a number of issues related to business conduct, consumer behaviour and cultural change.

In search for the less explicit factors which make up the hidden dimensions of marketing, I suggest having a fresh look at the following aspects: marketing as a system; needs and wants, and the process of exchange; consumer behaviour and distribution; products and innovation; the value of values; segmentation and fragmentation; change and learning; ambivalency,

quality and satisfaction; time perception; the po(i)etic dimension of marketing.

The ensuing sketch will deal with each of these aspects.

Marketing as a system

Let us define marketing as a system which aims to satisfy human needs and wants through organised exchange processes based on transactions. Since marketing is neither a charitable activity nor a zero-sum game, a corollary of this definition is that the outcome of the transactions is expected to be profit or, in any case, a surplus value.

A system is open, and therefore unpredictable, when it interacts with its environment. It is generally accepted that marketing, like other real-life systems, belongs to the category of open systems. The objective of marketing, however, is to put consumption in direct, "on line" relation with production, thus transforming an open system into a closed system. From a conceptual viewpoint, this aspect will be resumed in the last point of my presentation. On practical grounds, to close the system is a difficult objective to reach. The number of unpredictable variables which intervene between supply and demand is too great to relate them and to keep them under control.

Technological innovation and competition bring about constant change. Repetitive behaviour and brand loyalty, which would keep the system closed, are hard to obtain and even harder to keep. The picture is not modified by direct marketing, data base marketing and relationship marketing. Spurred on by the inventiveness of information technology, such methods can be quite useful in order to keep producers in contact with their customers. But they offer only limited and partial solutions. Far from being global, society is fragmented, markets are a constellation of niches, and consumer behaviour subsumes a web of cognitive and emotional interlinks.

The central marketing system—that is, the circuit production-distribution-consumption—can be described as a sum of interlocking open systems, all of which strive to “close up”. Even structures which used to be self-regulated have become unstable in the market place. Hospitals, cultural institutions and public services are witnesses of this reality. From the viewpoint of management, this situation calls for planning, coordination and control not only of marketing activities, but of all company actions.

The problems at issue can be best analyzed from a Multiple Perspective standpoint. Multiple Perspective is a modern attempt to address the rigidities of classical Systems Analysis. In such a construct, according to Linstone (1988) intuition and experience should be applied within three different perspectives: technical, organizational, and personal. All of them have a specific goal, mode of inquiry, ethical basis, planning horizon, communication, trade-off and optimization approach. Applications show that each perspective yields its own insights. Their integration can help management to deal effectively with complex systems.

Needs and wants, and the process of exchange

We have already stated that the aim of marketing is to satisfy human needs and wants, and to do so through exchanges based on value-producing transactions. Although more sophisticated interpretations can be suggested, these two aspects are the essential features of marketing.

The paradigm of needs and wants implies that marketers discover the (explicit or latent) wishes of the target markets, in order to enable manufacturers and distributors to provide the right kind and quantity of goods and services to people who are willing and able to pay for them. This is the essence of the marketing concept, taught to students on their first day of class.

According to the exchange paradigm, marketers implement the marketing concept through exchange. This is a process from which all parties involved are supposed to benefit. Other ways exist, by which individuals and groups can satisfy their wishes. Inheritance, conquest and theft are the most common. Exchange, however, is the only way that marketing recognizes as a means to achieve property, possession and use.

The role of needs and wants, and the role of exchange have always been the cornerstones of marketing, peculiar and specific to it. Up to a few years ago these roles were undisputed. It was accepted that needs and wants were not the same thing. Economists were at ease in hierarchizing each of them and in describing optimal levels of demand on the basis of marginal utility functions and convex preference orderings.

Marketing is more "human" than economics. It recognizes that, in addition to prices and income, expenditures are the outcome of feelings and other impalpable mechanisms. The Dutch recite that *Markten zijn mensen met centen en wensen* (markets are people with money and wishes). Marx (1867) put it differently, but the meaning was the same. He stated that whether human wishes come from the stomach or from the mind makes no difference. This is the way *Das Kapital* begins. All the rest came later.

In business, experience was *magistra vitae*. Industrial developments were studied on the basis of cases and past events. The goals of producers were clear. Originally, the key to success for them was to make good use of the factors of production. Later on, the necessity to be marketing oriented, rather than product and sales oriented, was recognized. Distribution posed no special problems. The role of wholesalers and retailers was to act as a *trait d'union* between production and consumption. Their function was performed through buying and selling, transportation, storage, assortment, grading, and risk taking. Even consumer demand was under control. Once marketing strategies were formulated, tactics followed. Instruments to implement them

were not lacking. Choice theories, based on such models as bounded rationality and expectancy value, provided the conceptual framework. Within acceptable margins of error, consumer behaviour could be explained and foreseen. In dubious cases, motivation research was available to explain the profound reasons why people behave in the way they do.

Doubts and warnings concerning this self-confidence already existed in the 60's. Modern science accepts that events take place at the intersect of technological and social forces. Yet the consequences, the intensity and the timing of the events are unknown. Even in the world of real time communication *erstens kommt es anders, zweitens als man denkt*, as the German wit expresses the fact that occurrences differ from expectations. Given the gap between decision making models and real life, business schools and departments of business administration, which had revised their curricula along theoretical lines, became more cautious. Today the cracks in the fabric of certainties are evident to all. It has become clear that the solution to one problem is not the solution to all problems. In most cases, that very solution creates other problems somewhere else.

The urgency for new rules of conduct is visible in the marketing field. It is visible not only because the world has changed its political profile and because economic recession is replacing the previous bonanza. Marketing specialists know how to deal with global threats and opportunities. They are also able to readjust the tune of their instruments in order to cope with faltering local demand. The issues are more deep-rooted, and call for original approaches to market developments and social trends.

Consumer behaviour and distribution

The evolution in consumer behaviour and in the distributive system impinges upon the fundamental characteristic of marketing, i.e. the paradigms of needs and wants, and of exchange.

Let alone the difficulty of distinguishing between needs and wants (what are needs for Jim are wants for John), both are relative, not absolute concepts. The wants of yesterday are needs of today. Refrigerators, color TV and airconditioning are typical examples. The hidden dimension of the issue, however, is somewhere else. In the past, demand was product-driven and buyer-centred. Stimuli for choosing a given commodity originated from the utilities perceived by the buyer in that very commodity. The expressions "consumer behaviour" and "purchase behaviour" could be used as synonymous. Nowadays demand is symbol-driven and environment-centred. People react not only to what products can do for them, but also to what products mean to them. Objects are read in their cultural significance, rather than in their economic performance. What happens before and after the act of purchasing is of crucial relevance in order to understand modern consumption. When basic (survival) needs are satisfied, people look at abstract, external symbols of satisfaction. This is why needs and wants are so strictly related to the set of values, lifestyles and images of society. We have moved from products as bundles of utilities, to products as bundles of meanings.

Also exchange is going through structural mutation. The size and scope of companies which operate in the distributive sector are of another order of magnitude than what they used to be. Their work is more complex and sophisticated. Due to vertical integration and to the relevance of private brands, borderlines between producers and channels are blurred. Where differences exist, power relationships are not the traditional ones. Once we would have found the distributors in the offices of the producers, asking to be received. Now the picture is reversed.

The nature of the evolution is even more fundamental than what emerges from the institutional configuration of the commercial sector. Transactions have always rested on money (financial payments) or on goods and services of equal value (bartering). It is not so anymore. What has taken place outstrips the shift from utilitarian exchange to symbolic and mixed exchange, explained by Bagozzi (1975). Increasingly, the counterpart of goods bought and services rendered is made up by intangible means. The most important of such means is a scarce resource that can never be replaced: time. We buy where we find a parking place. The decisive choice factor in a hospital is not the doctor's fee, it is the waiting list of patients. Although trains are cheaper, airlines are faster.

Transactions among firms are also different. Not that the exchange which used to take place previously was homogeneous. The price mechanism always produced incremental benefits, otherwise neither the seller would sell nor the buyer would buy. Benefits never were identical for both parties. But once the parameters of exchange were simple and clear. Now they are complex and unclear. What counts is not only availability and quick delivery but a host of other services, including joint promotional activities. Various types of agreements, alliances and acquisitions, that customers are not aware of, also have a direct impact on the mechanism of trade.

Two centuries ago Adam Smith explained that "the real price of every thing, what every thing really costs to the man who wants to acquire it, is the toil and trouble of acquiring it" (Smith 1776). That definition has never been as fitting as it is today. Marketing infrastructures and sales facilities are in line with reducing customers' "toil and trouble". Conflicts and cooperation follow new routes. The value of time, however, cannot be equated with the value of money, nor of other tangible objects. Psychic rewards differ from monetary rewards. Costs and benefits are not equidistributed. They cannot even be assessed with the same instruments of measurement. The service society has

revolutionized the nature of transactions. We live in a system of asymmetric exchange.

Products and innovation

In the same years in which Adam Smith was laying the foundations of economic science, the French enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot (1772) wrote a delightful short story dedicated to his own dressing gown. Although worn out and shabby, it was quite comfortable. The man felt *pittoresque et beau* in it. When he received a new, more elegant robe as a present, he accepted it with pleasure. Upon insistence of his friends, who thought that he could not sit in front of an old desk when wearing such a beautiful robe, the desk was replaced with a new one. Purchases went on with a new chair, new curtains and a new carpet. Much to his regret, Diderot found himself surrounded by unfamiliar objects. A stranger in his own room, he kept nurturing nostalgic feelings for the previous setting, where he felt at ease, and which had gone forever.

What can we learn from this story? A Canadian anthropologist (McCracken 1988) remarked that the Diderot effect works in two ways. In one way it acts as an innovative force. Through "departure purchases" the consumer disrupts his pattern of habitual buying. Product development, packaging, design, advertising and merchandising are the marketing cues which stimulate the buying process in our economy. Gifts are important turning points to start the process. As in the case of the dressing gown, they provoke a rolling spiral of successive purchases, which involve a cycle of goods of higher quality and modern style.

On the other hand, resistance to change protects men and women from the intrusion of destabilizing objects into their lives. It prevents goods from entering abruptly and in a threatening manner into personal experiences. By standing for con-

tinuity and for cultural consistency of the material world, the mechanism acts as a conservative force, which discriminates and filters the inflow of innovation. The objects which surround us are constant monitors of who we are and who we aspire to be. They also help us to keep a Gestaltian pattern of congruity with our past.

On balance, I think that the Diderot effect pushes forward the demand (and therefore the supply) of additional products — whether the consumer likes it or not. The stream of new goods is only partially the result of human will. To a large extent it is the result of technological development *per se*. To throw the dice is a human act, but the way the dice falls is “decided” by the dice itself. Technology is stronger than individuals.

Whether all this is a good or a bad thing belongs to another category of reasoning. For most people, the process of creative destruction, as Schumpeter (1976) would have called it, is beneficial and welcome. For the routinist, and for those who cannot cope with change, it is distressing and painful.

The issue covers a long-debated argument, which hovers between two extremes. According to one viewpoint, the increase of goods and services implies a negative process, by which materialism chases away spiritual values. The neo-paupers who believe that people should minimize material wealth, rather than maximize it, are in good company. They are with Dyogenes, St. Francis of Assisi and Mahatma Ghandi, to cite a few of the great minimizers. To some extent, they are also with economists *à la* Galbraith, with some green fundamentalists, and with the large numbers of intellectuals who held the wheel of consumption responsible for the creation of artificial desires.

On the other side, many share the view that the history of progress is the history of more and better goods. They think that material progress, scientific development and spiritual values go hand in hand. A continuous flow of goods makes the

majority of mankind happier and freer. The addition of varieties to product lines competing for consumer attention enriches the choice process of large masses of people, while enhancing their general welfare.

Coming back to contemporary consumer behaviour, it can be noticed that today demand is shaped less by the push-and-pull of single products than by the environment which surrounds them. In the environment-centred mode of buying, products are not independent variables. The degree of arousal is stimulated by the similarity and the difference that people perceive among goods performing the same function, or sharing a similar aesthetic *allure*. In the scientific jargon these interactions are named paradigmatic and syntagmatic. A Vacheron Constantin watch is judged in relation to Patek Philip, Rolex, and similar brands. Valentino is judged in relation to Armani, Versace, and other fashion and non-fashion designers who produce combinative objects. It is well known that these types of judgments take place in relation to what is thought and done by others, namely by the people who see us and by whom we want to be seen.

This is in tune with the structuralist point of view, according to which the key to grasping an overall image is the context in which products and brands are positioned. An example is provided by the current advertising campaign of Mulino Bianco, a line of cakes, biscuits and cereals produced by the Barilla industry. The semiotics of the campaign has been studied carefully. The scene gives a quiet aspect of rural life. A white farm house with a mill stands on a green hill. Parents, children, and friends sit leisurely around a table. All ages are represented. Slow tempo and a relaxed, informal atmosphere are typical of a place which is far from the hectic commitments of work. The objective of the pay-off is to provoke a mental relationship between the "good old days" and cakes. The latter are presented as genuine food to be eaten every day during normal meals. In Italy, where cakes are served only on special occasions, and where the need

to escape from urban tension is highly felt, the campaign is a great success (Ferrero 1990). In France, where eating habits are different and the appeal of rural life is weaker, the same campaign did not produce equally successful results.

If the approach of Mulino Bianco is correct, much of the orthodox communication theory based on USP (Unique Selling Proposition), according to which the success of a product depends on the uniqueness of its attributes, loses its momentum. It should be replaced by a sort of ESP (Environmental Selling Proposition), from which the public can infer, rather than being explicitly exposed to, the characteristics of the item offered on sale. In such a context, the product is the byproduct. The phenomenon is the epiphenomenon, or the shadow of itself. Plato, the master of all philosophers, would be happy to hear that, after twenty five centuries, his man of the cavern is still alive.

The value of values

Some implications of the product concept's shift from bundle of utilities to bundle of meanings have already been discussed. The implications are far-reaching when they are connected with the issue of values and lifestyles.

Products detached from their meanings are dead products. In order to give them vitality, the skillful marketer will treat products as ideas, and ideas as products. Also ideas have a packaging problem, made up by coding and encoding them, and by their presentation. In TV, the language of ideas is iconic and oral. Written messages involve the choice of styles, as well the size and position of the text. Ideas have a problem of cost and price, due to the effort made by the sender when formulating the message, and by the receiver when storing it in his memory. They have communication problems, posed by the choices concerned with who says what to whom, through what

means, and with what effect. Distribution problems exist, inasmuch as an idea can be diffused through mass media, opinion leaders, word of mouth, or other means.

Strategically, the task of selling products requires the preliminary identification of the target markets having the highest likelihood to accept the ideas which stand behind them. If we want to sell oranges, since the core features of oranges are their content of vitamin C and their thirst-quenching potentials, we must be able to package, price, communicate and distribute the ideas of energy and refreshment. As we have seen with Mulino Bianco, concepts must fit within a coordinated system of metaphorical references.

Market assessment and quantification are the job of researchers. To explore the demographic and economic composition of the market is not enough. Like the movement of satellites in celestial mechanics, the movements of population are reliable and predictable. Yet, their use is limited, and can be misleading. Age breaks are the least predictive index. Exposed to all sort of stimuli, children behave like adults. In the words of the novelist Moravia (1984), *i bambini sono adulti, con l'aggravante che sono bambini* (children are adults, with the aggravating fact that they are children). The value of age is culture bound. In China, elderly people are respected more than youngsters. In the West, a few years ago yuppies and yuppies were "in". Now the interesting target groups are DINKS (couples with Double Income and No Kids) and OPALS (Older People with Active Lifestyles). The former deserve attention because they have money. The latter, because they have both money and time. Also income is not a good indicator, since preferences do not follow Engel's law (which, in any case, is not applicable to brands). The role of income is complicated by the intricate aspects of scarcity described by Hirsch (1977), as well as by the coexistence of private and public companies which follow different pricing policies.

Market researchers are proud to have found a way to overcome the limits of demographic surveys using psychographic segmentation. At a macro level, they say, the study of AIO (Activities, Interests and Opinions) provides the *Zeitgeist* of any historical period. At a micro level, the identification of groups with similar patterns of thinking and living provides the right information needed for differentiated marketing strategies.

Is this faith justified, or is it again an excess of self confidence? In my view, psychographic segmentation has indeed meant a step forward with respect to demographic segmentation. It strengthened the competitive position of producers and distributors willing to look more sharply into the market. It opened new vistas to the relationship between marketing and social research. It is still relevant today, provided we are prepared to admit that values and lifestyles have a limited duration. This means that market signals can be spotted only if investigations are conducted frequently. Furthermore, values and lifestyles do not explain the decision making process of consumers. This means that results originating from psychographic research must be supported by further analyses and careful evaluation before business can implement *ad hoc* marketing moves.

Segmentation and fragmentation

To make the above statements less apodyctic, I want to illustrate the case of Italy, where psychographics have a reliable record of longitudinal research. In Italian society, it was in the sixties that the traditional values of saving and thrift were fully replaced by the values of consumption. At that time, the country was well advanced in its post-war reconstruction, and the possession of consumer and industrial goods was indicative of personal status and of national well-being.

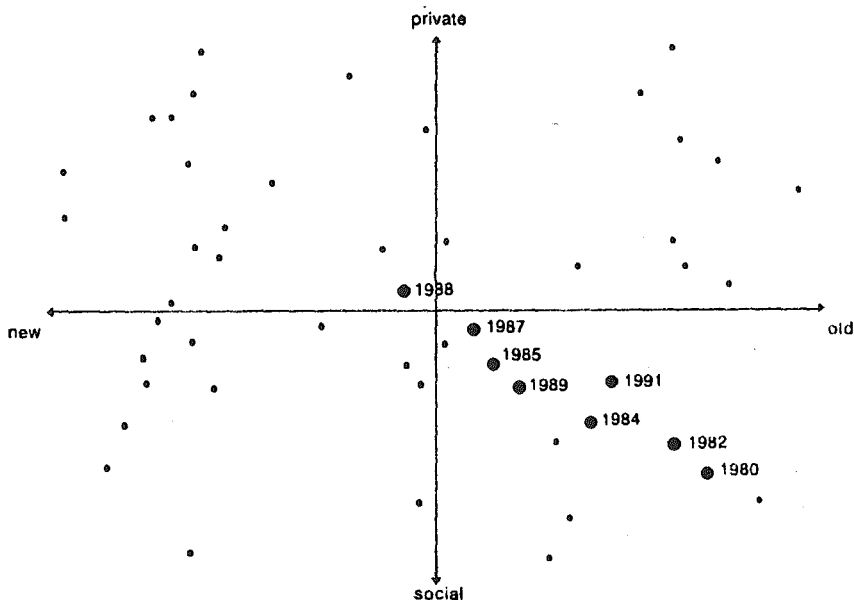
The picture was different in the seventies. Inspired by the students' movement of '68, the affluent society wanted liberty for all, and freedom from authority. To "make love not war", a return to nature and, more generally, standing for egalitarian principles

were the constituents of the new ethos. Sexual permissiveness and a revision of male/female relationships were important aspects of it. With the values of being opposed to the values of having, ownership and spending lost all positive connotation. Considered a source of alienation more subtle and pervasive than what the factory had been for the working class, the civilization of consumption was condemned.

It took Italian society about ten years to praise the consumer again, with a drive from a collective to a more personalized approach to goods and services. The eighties saw a revival of hedonism and enjoyment of life. Although this hedonism was shaped in a different way than in the sixties, consumption was reaccepted as a positive value. Mao and Che Guevara had already lost their charisma. Market oriented approaches were welcomed. Advertising, which had been accused of ideological colonization, was again legitimized, and appreciated as entertainment.

At the end of the eighties, and even more at the beginning of the present decade, a dramatic change pervaded Italian society. In their graphic expression, the socio-cultural currents which make up the psychographic structure of a country are usually shown within a framework made by two axes. The horizontal axis goes from old to new, that is from tradition to radicalism. The vertical axis goes from social to private, respectively associated with minimum and maximum propensity to consume. The small dots indicate the position of the various currents. The big dots indicate the aggregate clusterings (barycentres) of the currents in different years. In Italy, from 1980 through 1988 the barycentres are all positioned along a consistent line of modernization. Fabris (1991) calls this pattern "passage to North-West". As shown in Fig. 1 — which is based on research conducted by GPF & Associates — the years 1989 and 1991 indicate an inversion of the trend, with a deep return to previous positions. More recent data concerning 1993 (not indicated in the map) confirm the involution.

Fig. 1
Italian socio-cultural map



The inversion of the trend has been interpreted in various ways. One way is the collapse of the communist world, with the end of East-West antagonism. Another way is the massive immigration of races, which transformed the local society from mono- to polyethnic. Rising unemployment is a third good reason, especially because the loosing of jobs was flanked by unsolved problems in basic services such as justice, health, and schools. The ecological issue, which became a national concern, may have also contributed to the set-back.

Whatever the explanations, the intensity of the social earthquake which took place in Italy at the end of the eighties can be compared with the one which—for different motivations and with different characteristics—had its epicentre in Paris at the end of the sixties. Neo-conservatism was the result, with all that this brings about - from needs of safety and protection, to the urge for new moral principles and strict regulations. At the political level, bitterness and protest against those who had misused their power became high. Business conduct was also criticised on ethical grounds. At the administrative level, the quest for decentralization was so strong, that national unity seemed to be in danger. At the social level, excessive freedom was stigmatized, formal relations were habitual again, fantasy was associated with risk. With reference to commercial habits, pleasure in buying decreased. People became more price sensitive. They expected "cleverness" and content from products, rather than status and appearance. This is still so. One of the currents which remained strong is polysensualism. In order to succeed in the market place, products have to satisfy all five senses. Another growing current is individuality. The move from individualism to individuality reflects a more mature, less solipsistic balance between ego-centred feelings and the social milieu, and greater respect for the environment and its finite resources.

The above describes the waves of Italian cultural dynamics in the last three decades. The waves are likely to become shorter in the near future. Social scientists foresee that their pattern will have ups and downs. The number of socio-cultural currents under scrutiny will increase. At present they are about fifty. Considering the ongoing process of diversification, in the coming years it may be embarrassing to count them.

For businesses, it will be more difficult to address specific marketing actions to so many target groups. What makes the difficulty is not only the number of groups, but also their instabilities and interactions. Structures are "deconstructed" (Derrida

1978) and "dissipative" (Prigogine 1980). Activities are scattered, interests diverge, opinions fluctuate. Technically speaking, it is awkward to work with overlapping clusters, characterized by high infra-group and low inter-group variance. Contradictions exist even within the same individual, whose moods vary, and within his deep self (more on this later). Perhaps this is not abnormal, schizophrenic behaviour. It may well be that it is the normal, natural behaviour of people belonging to a fragmented society. Nobody can be sure of this. Not even students of postmodernism — for whom fragmentation of all conceptual and behavioural unities is a central concern — can go beyond tentative hypotheses and conjectures. Historical precedents of this kind of society simply do not exist.

Change and learning

The Italian case is emblematic of a more general situation. All post-industrial societies experience change. Yet, its nature and frequency differ in time and space. One can visualize at least three types of cultural change.

Change 1 is slow change. It is the result more of natural rhythms than of human determination. Pre-industrial societies, based on class stratification and regulated by tradition, are rigid. People do not move - either physically, economically, or mentally. Innovation emerges from conflict. Frustration and inequality tend to grow, until a revolution makes them explode.

Change 2 is characterised by high mobility and frequent mutations. This type of change is destabilizing. It disrupts the existing order. New equilibrium is reached through tensions. Ideologies (or end of ideologies) and practical circumstances spell turmoil. Revolutionary upheavals, however, seldom occur. Even when innovation is fuzzy, a process of adjustment takes care of the transition from old to new. Adjustments are channeled into existing institutions and through organizational procedures. The prevailing temper is that of a relatively stable environment, punctuated by innovation. In such a climate, people talk a lot

about change. Promises and projects of change become a fashionable refrain, preached from all pulpits. In Western European countries, change has been the word most used by political leaders for the last twenty years. Discontinuity and turbulence have been theorised in all their aspects. Entrepreneurs, however, are not asked to theorise about concepts. Managers, and marketing managers in particular, must always be prepared to act. They get accustomed to face the unexpected, and to anticipate it. As noticed by Eppink (1978), flexibility is required from them at strategic, competitive and operational levels.

Change 3 is permanent change. It is continuous and omnipresent. People accept it as an ideological commitment (Lévi-Strauss 1966) and as an existential condition. It is not seen as a happening which perturbs a familiar scene. In change 2 order was the rule. New ideas, even if frequent, were the exception. Here, transformation is the rule. Brief, short-lived periods of comparative calm are the exception. Flux and processes, rather than discrete events, are regarded as conditions for survival and growth. Companies know that they are mobile units within a mobile system of economic, social, political and technological modulations. This postulates a high degree of fitness between the organization and the environment. To change from a slow-moving model to a constantly dynamic model of conduct may be hard, but it is vital. Whitehead (1967) must have already thought of this, when he said that the man who used to stay on the same job for a lifetime once was a godsend and now is a calamity.

At a conceptual level, there is nothing new in a condition of this kind. Heraclitus' idea that *panta rei*, and that no man can step in the same river twice, was already a portrait of permanent change. One of his disciples, Cratylus, went even further. He maintained that, by the time a given object is mentioned, that very object is not the same as before. Hence, he thought that the only way to deal with reality was to stop talking and to point out objects by finger. This he did, remaining silent for ten

years. Given the hypothetical existence of infinitely small time-quanta, modern physics would also criticize this behaviour. Moreover, Heisenberg (1969) reminds us of the principle of undetermination, according to which any observer modifies the object observed. Steeped into abstract logic, at first glance these arguments seem remote from our field. We should not forget, however, that the debate of the pre-Socratics revolved around the question of exactitude of meaning, and of subjective vs. objective truth — two issues which have a place in modern thought, and which are central to marketing research (measurement accuracy).

At a practical level, change 3 is a new cultural condition. Change 2, including the accelerating pace of innovative events, is already accepted. Change 3 will be the distinctive feature of the coming years. This is why learning is so important. Reg Revans (1966), the inventor of action-learning, is right: if change is greater than learning, disorder and decay will follow; if change equals learning, the result is cultural equilibrium; if learning is greater than change, progress will flourish. We are, of course, speaking of cognitive learning, rather than additive learning. Additive learning is the acquisition of specific pieces of communicable information, no matter how abstruse this is. Cognitive learning implies that the behaviour of people remains significantly different from previous ways of behaving. This type of learning includes self awareness and awareness of others, capacity to handle unknown situations, skills in translating thoughts into action. Most needed today is what Bateson (1972) calls deuterio-learning, or learning how to learn. The learning organization is based on this.

Regretfully, marketing is far from being in a satisfactory state, at least as far as cognitive learning is concerned. Applying to our field what also happens in other contexts, we can say with Berry (1978) that we are between two stories. The Old Story—the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it—is not functioning properly, and we have not learned the New Story. Right now, the marketing community is having diffi-

culty in applying the available stock of knowledge to a fuller understanding of the plot that leads to the New Story.

Heuristic knowledge and wisdom seem to be far from our reach. The insights of the founding fathers who gave depth to, and inspired the modern study of consumption—from Veblen to Maslow, from Katona to Lazarsfeld—are out of question. Not much help has come from the sophisticated techniques of academic marketing, whose impact on policy makers, businessmen and practitioners has been really modest. Interdisciplinary approaches might have helped, if consumer research had not become “a playing ground for econometricians, psychometricians, biometricians and mathematical modelers” (Sheth 1992). Other researchers have difficulties with innovation, and with going from the know-how of techniques to the know-why of human change. At the risk of professional emargination and personal disenchantment, they cannot undo the knots.

Learning processes were the topic of my inaugural lecture at this University thirteen years ago. The title of the lecture was “Academic Marketing: for Books or for Life?”. I tried to demonstrate the falsity of the dilemma citing praxeology, which is the science of doing. Praxeology rests on the simbiotic relationship between theory and practice. Its implementation is based on the cooperation among academics, professionals and managers. I am still convinced that, as long as the content (and language) of university work do not move from abstract decision-making to applied problem-solving, and unless government and business are prepared to open their doors more widely to analytical thinking, no authentic progress will be attained. Books are important for the implementation of praxeology, but not all are equally important. Books that make us think become our companions, and prompt us to action. Books that originate from the “publish or perish” syndrome have the opposite effect.

Let us return to our fragmented society. St. John of the Cross said that "if you want to reach the point you don't know, you must take the road you don't know". The whole post-industrial society is uncertain of its destination. We certainly need more light on the road. As far as consumer behaviour is concerned, a tentative indication on the next point to reach can be expressed. We can give a name to it (or, better, point it out with a finger, like Cratylus would have done). The name is individualized mass consumption.

Ambivalency, quality and satisfaction

Individualized mass consumption is a contradiction in terms. It acknowledges the fact that, for cost and efficiency reasons, production must work on large quantities. At the same time, each piece of output must be custom-made in order to please the market.

At first glance, this is a paradox, and cannot be solved. But it is only a problem. Every problem can be solved. If it cannot be solved it is not a problem, it is a constraint. The ancient Greeks had a special word to express internal contradictions. The word was *oxymoron*. They used it to denote expressions like beautiful ugliness, unstable stability, silent noise. Foucault (1966) speaks of *le soleil noir de l'ossimore* (the black sun of the oxymoron). When, instead of two words, two entire sentences were used, the second of which had a meaning opposite to the first, the term applied was *epanortosis*.

Oxymoron and epanortosis are good metaphors of modern markets. This is so especially if we consider that internal contradictions are a reality not only within groups and among different people, but also inside the same person. Freud (1899) understood this better than anybody else, when he spoke of the coexistence of two pulsions: eros and thanatos, as well as of two principles: pleasure and reality, both of which operate, inside the individual, at conscious and unconscious levels. The fact that the same person fulfills several roles adds surface fea-

tures to the fundamental, bio-cultural bivalency of human beings. Clever marketers try to address ambivalence working on a Janus-faced model of consumers. It is not easy, it looks like a puzzle. But it can be done.

Various approaches can be followed. One is to identify the most interesting cultural trends, to isolate their contradictions, and to work with multidimensional sets of sociometric variables. Another is to figure out minimax solutions of market options and to deal with vectors. Trends from which to start exercises of this kind could be the following: from quantity to quality, from rigidity to flexibility, from hierarchies to networks, from single functions to processes, from permanent jobs to transient occupations, from products to services, from mono- to polysensualism, from brand loyalty to brand switching, from local markets to global markets. All these tendencies contain internal inconsistencies that research can detect, and professionals can operationalise.

A tendency worth specific attention is the move from quantity to quality. Quality, popularly defined, is fitness for use. When seen as full dedication to customers and full involvement of employees in the pursuit of excellence, it is called Total Quality (TQ). Whether TQ started as a technique and became a philosophy, or viceversa, is irrelevant. In any case, it is not only a movement. It has become a religion, with its rites and its adepts, even if the official denomination is "quality culture". Their affiliates are zealous and ambitious. Their aim is the transformation (transformation, not revision) of the style of management, as Deming (1982) states. To become "experts in creating change on the people side of the organizational equation" (Ciampa 1992) is one of the means to reach that aim.

Strictly speaking, TQ is not the business of marketing. Marketers share the belief about change and the need to be alert to it. Obviously, they also endorse the view about the primary role of the consumer. However, they are not organizational experts. As we shall see later on, they may get busy with Internal Mar-

keting, an approach which deals with the application of the marketing concept inside companies. But this is as far as they go. Their battlefield has never been the total spectrum of companies' performance. Marketers also want excellence in their domain, without making a slogan of it. Nor do all of them follow the same credo and adopt the same style. Personally, for instance, I have never used the term excellence. Like the orthodox Jews who did not dare to pronounce the name of the Lord, I find the frequent claim for excellence a mark of arrogance, if not an attempt to cover an inferiority complex. Excellence is an ideal state of perfection. We can strive for it, it must guide our thoughts and actions, but we cannot reach it, and we might as well use it with prudence, especially when we claim to be able to teach it.

Sometimes we do not even know what quality is. Polanyi (1983) observed that "it is pathetic to watch the endless efforts—equipped with microscopy and chemistry, with mathematics and electronics—to reproduce a single violin of the kind the half-literate Stradivarius turned out as a matter of routine more than 200 years ago". The dispute about the famous violins of Stradivarius is still going on. A Hungarian scholar believes that the man used a special varnish, made by himself from the pulverised skin of shrimps. Another scholar affirms that he made use of a volcanic soil which exists only in the Vesuvian area near Naples, called *pozzolana*. A third expert is convinced that a sort of magnetized powder was employed for the grounding of the wood. By playing the instrument, the resonance causes polar patterns in the powder, which change according to the frequency of the resonance. I believe another thesis. It seems that, before selling his violins, Stradivarius spent seven full-moon nights with each of them, on a hill, in the open air. Call me un-scientific, but this is the explanation I prefer.

A few years ago, it was conceived that TQ could replace the marketing concept. Mesmerised by the Japanese experience — from Quality Circles to Just-in-Time practices and Computer In-

egrated Manufacturing — consultants speculated that marketing departments could be englobed into more advanced structures, based on interdependencies. They were wrong. They confused tactical marketing and logistics with strategic marketing. Facts, not theories, have already proven that to lose the specificities of the marketing role (and organization) is dangerous. For further information, ask Parker Pen what happened to the shrinking of its product line, with special reference to the reaction of distributors. Like all living organisms, companies remain competitive, and customers are best served, through diversification of functions and well-defined allocation of responsibilities, not through their elimination.

There is more to it. In line with a recent comment by Peter Drucker (1993), it can be observed that, at least in the service industry, the contraposition between quantity and quality is not correct. The noted expert makes the point that, while in the manufacturing industry the focus in increasing productivity is on work, in the knowledge and services sector it is on performance. Quality must be built into the process. Once this has been done, performance is largely determined by quantity, e.g. the number of minutes it takes to make a hospital bed the prescribed way.

From the standpoint of demand, the contrast between "more" and "better" makes sense. Consumers want better goods, cleaner air, efficient services, not larger volumes of them. But even here some distinction must be made, lest the argument remains at the superficial level of generalizations.

A distinction involves the difference between pleasure and pain. Empirical evidence supports the fact that the two feelings are not polar opposites. The point is relevant, because pleasure and pain produce, respectively, satisfaction and dissatisfaction — two elements of crucial importance in consumer behaviour. If a man hits a knee against a stone he feels pain, he may even break his knee. This does not mean that if the man does not hit

his knee he feels pleasure (unless somebody else next to him breaks his own knee, and he does not. Given the tricks of human nature, perhaps the man who has escaped the accident derives a psychic satisfaction from the unfortunate event. This would be another facet of the issue, that we had better ignore here. Likewise, we are ignoring the provoking of pleasure through pain, i.e. sadomasochism, that we gladly leave to psychoanalysts).

There are people who want to avoid the pains of life, and others who seek its pleasures. In the United States they belong to the first category. Their food is healthy but tasteless. Their dieting is successful in guarding against excess weight and cholesterol, it is certainly not pleasurable. Europeans, especially South Europeans, eat more and richer food, but they get fat and then they complain. Their trend toward health and fitness is very recent, and only a small minority follow it.

Herzberg (1966) built his motivation theory on the difference between factors that cause satisfaction and factors that cause dissatisfaction. He was not interested in eating habits, yet his arguments are made of the same substance as the above remarks. Tibor Scitovsky (1976), the Stanford economist, ventured into psychology hoping to find there what he did not find in the theories of his peers. He found that the difference between comfort and pleasure is responsible for our "joyless economy". Higher and higher levels of consumptions, he explains, are seen by the members of post-industrial societies as a source of pleasure, while in fact they offer only dull, boring comfort. There are two types of satisfaction: comfort and stimulation. Beyond a certain point, they are mutually exclusive. More of one can be achieved only at the sacrifice of the other.

One of the paradoxes of the fragmented society is that people do not know what they want. Whether they know it or not, they want both to avoid pain and to get pleasure. Most of the time

they want both things simultaneously. Sometimes they want one of them today, and the other tomorrow. Individualized mass consumption must come to grips with this bivalency or polivalency.

Time perception

All events — not only marketing events — happen in space and time. Space can be considered as a passive condition of behaviour, because it is variable only in the measure one changes it. Time is intrinsically dynamic (Moore 1963). In marketing, concern of space is implicit in all matters related to where to buy, distribute and sell. As far as time goes, its economic relevance is acknowledged by the popular saying that equates it to money. Also timing is relevant. A good move today may be a bad move tomorrow. All marketing activities are affected by time and timing.

This is well established, and needs no elaboration. What is less explored is the fact that people are more sensitive to space than to time. The notion of space is clear even to those who are not acquainted with geography. The notion of time is less easy to grasp. The "internal clock" of human beings is not tuned with mechanical clocks and calendars. In order to convey the idea of, say, traffic congestion in Amsterdam, it would be more effective to show a traffic jam taking place in a city like New York, rather than to demonstrate that the same thing will happen here in the future, if the circulation of cars increases at a certain rate. To demonstrate what happens somewhere else, all that is needed is a TV network and some good photographs. To deal with future events requires extrapolative thinking, which is more demanding than watching. The advertising industry knows this, although not many of its members would know that, by handling situations similar to the one just described, what they do is to trade time with space, and to compress time.

Time can be traded with space, and compressed or expanded, because human beings manipulate their own understanding of time. This manipulation is linked to the emotional impact of the events, as well as to their position in time. High-involvement events are remembered more easily, or imagined more vividly, than low-involvement ones. Facts which have taken place in the recent past are overstressed, facts which have taken place in the distant past are understressed. Likewise, the nearer in future time an event is expected to happen, the greater is the attention that people devote to it, and viceversa.

The underlying aspect of this mechanism has to do with the ways people experience time and react to it. Time perception, psychological time, mental time, personal time, subjective time, social time and cultural time are all denominations used to differentiate human time from physical, absolute, Newtonian, chronological time. Marketing is interested not in what time is, but in what time is felt to be, as expressed by the first group of the above denominations. It may be added that not only humans, but also animals seem to undergo time-related psychological processes (Wearden and Lejeune 1993). Given the amount of attention devoted to (and money spent on) animal care, perhaps one day marketing specialists will turn their attention even to animal time.

Different creatures perceive and use time in different ways, both at group and at individual level. In Western society people follow a monochronic order, scheduling one thing at a time, with no overlappings. In the Oriental concept, people follow a polychronic order. They perform various activities at the same time, both mentally and physically, in a less defined temporal frame (Hall 1983). African time is experienced in terms of a basic distinction between things that have happened and things that have not happened (Morello and Van der Reis 1990).

Within the same culture, different individuals perceive time and its flow in different manners. The relationships between

attitudes toward time and market behavior have an important place in my research. Two studies may clarify the issue. One deals with marketing strategies for Sicilian wine, the other deals with Internal Marketing in a Dutch bank.

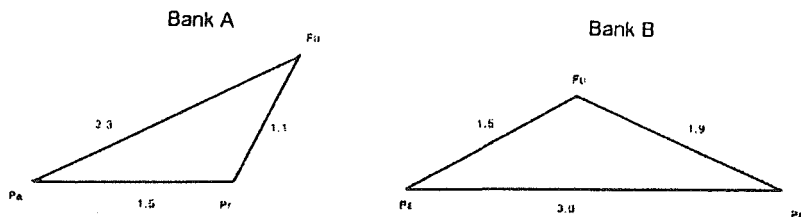
Sicily produces 1,000 million litres of wine per year. The wine market is very competitive, both for branded and bulk wine. A major research project was conducted on behalf of the regional association of producers. The project was aimed at understanding the relationship between time perception and attitudes toward wine in general, and toward Sicilian wine in particular. The question was important for the "made in" issue. Communication campaigns could have emphasized either the Sicilian origin of the product, or its Italian origin. Our hypothesis was that a market segmentation consisting of a time-based typology might have been useful to find the best alternative. Results confirmed the hypothesis, and also shed light on new products' acceptance, buying habits, impulse vs. rational buying, brand images and positioning. All these aspects were analyzed from the standpoint of the temporal perspectives shown by different market segments (Morello 1993). Sicilian producers are currently busy with implementing the results of the investigation.

The second study was conducted on behalf of NMB (now ING bank). According to the principles of Internal Marketing, ideas and jobs are considered as products to be promoted and "sold" to company employees, who are viewed as customers. We wanted to see how personnel reacted to this approach, and what were the possibilities of its implementation. We also wanted to investigate — just before the merger of NMB with another financial institution, namely Postbank — the attitudes of the staff toward other innovative organizational measures. One of the methods used was to assess the feelings of personnel toward the past, the present and the future. The affective distance among the three temporal dimensions was tapped through semantic differential scales, filled in by representative samples of managers and employees. Results

proved that time orientations were not homogeneous. Using the notion of inter-concept distances, it was found that the distance between the present and the future was the shortest. The present and the past were somewhat more remote. The maximum distance was between past and future. This indicates a well-balanced time perception of the total group. Significant differences among sub-groups were spotted. As planned, the outcome of the analysis was used by the company for internal purposes of organizational improvement.

It may be interesting to compare the indexes and the geometric expressions of the temporal structure found at NMB (Fig. 2, Bank A) and at another financial institution (Fig. 2, Bank B) where the maximum distance was between past and present, the future was nearest to the past, and the distance between present and future had an intermediate position. Bank B showed a conservative profile. This group perceived the future as a return to the past — a sort of tomorrow tinged with yesterday — rather than as a time of new ideas and innovation (Morello 1988).

Fig. 2
Inter-concept distances



One may wonder why research of this kind is actually carried out. In the NMB study for instance, would it not have been easier to have a look at the dates of birth of the subjects, and work on their ages? After all, young men and women can be expected to be more time-conscious than elderly people, and to project themselves into the future, rather than residing in the present and/or in the past. In reality, things do not go this way. Among youngsters time awareness is frequently low, among mature persons it is high. An increasing proportion of mankind — not only exceptional people like Picasso, Charlie Chaplin and Bertrand Russell — is vigorous and productive well beyond gray hair. We have already seen that these people are eager to partake in market activities. Usually, they spend most of their mental time in the future. On the contrary, for many boys and girls the time horizon is restricted. Their “motivational space”, as Nuttin (1953) calls the future, is shallow. Fortunately, future-oriented young people are also no exception. But temporal perspectives are correlated with personality traits, not with age. Something is already known about these correlations, and about how they affect market behaviour. Much more remains to be explored.

The po(i)etic dimension of marketing

Even if we do not know much about time, we know for sure that the perception of time and of its passage affect all living organisms. We also know that we can have a cognitive approach to human time. It is hoped that this will lead to a better understanding of marketing processes.

But what is a living organism? And what is cognition? These questions are at the roots of all the issues we have analysed so far. Although they cannot be discussed here, it would be an omission not to express the awareness that they constitute the proto-questions of any subject related to any social science, marketing included.

Those who enjoy arguments of this kind should read an essay on "Autopoiesis and Cognition", written by two biologists, Maturana and Varela (1980). The book is provocative and controversial. On some important issues, even the authors disagree. Perhaps their sociology "smells of the medical laboratory and of the working domain of the neurophysiologist", as the preface admits. But the work has the refreshing value of asking fundamental questions, and of providing non-conventional answers. It departs from the usual characterization of living organisms in terms of purpose, functions and information. Autopoietic (that is, self-reproducing) structures rest on a topology where all elements constitute a closed system. The system is autonomous and self-referential. It englobes cognition, seen as a biological function whose organization inside the nervous structure permits all interactions necessary to survival and growth.

At an abstract level, this is in line with my position, that marketing systems are open systems which strive to become closed systems. Marketing can be considered an autopoietic system. All the seeds of evolution grow within it, breeding cognitive complexities. There is a distinctive difference, however, between the outward-looking mechanism of marketing and the inward-looking mechanisms of other systems. I shall submit that this difference—which is substantial—involves the poetic dimension of our field.

Reference to a poetic dimension in marketing will come as a surprise, especially to those who have had only distrustful accounts about merchants and markets. How the negative image developed and why the stereotypes persist is another matter. The explanation of it would imply a historical analysis, which remains to be done. In any case, even among well-informed observers, as far as I know nobody has ever considered the fact that marketing activities are made of, and rest upon, a poetic mode.

The origin of words is useful to clarify meanings. The adjective poetic comes from the substantive *poiesis*, which, literally, means creation. The Greeks used it to indicate the process of creation in its pure form, that is a form which does not make us of objects. Poiesis did not necessarily imply bringing into existence something from nothing. It was used also to denote innovative combinations of existing resources. But it excluded the intermediation of instruments. When instruments—such as stones, artefacts or machines—were used, the Greeks spoke of *tekne*. Poiesis involved thoughts, feelings, emotions, sentiments. These might have evoked spiritual or material concerns, love or hate, fears or hope, sadness, joy or irony. Rational thinking and empirical references did not alter the poietic pattern, but they were not indispensable components of it. In artistic creation, for instance, they might have been absent. Poiesis and poietic feelings would accept abstractness, vagueness and ambiguities that *tekne* and technological processes would not accept. Likewise, technological processes might have followed repetitive, non-creative paths. The two realities were considered complementary, not contrasting. They coexisted harmoniously.

Marketing is a combination of poiesis and *tekne*. The fact that the artistic dimension of marketing is not opposed to its scientific dimension is not new. Scientists look for similarities in a world of diversities, artists look for diversities in a world of similarities. Marketers do both. This is why creative rigour (another oxymoron?) is needed in their work. Furthermore, marketing has stayed out of the debate on the “two cultures”. In line with modern conceptions, it has always denied the contraposition between technical and humanistic visions.

However, these are not my main points. Nor do I refer to the fact that marketing can be applied to aesthetic and artistic production. It is well known that marketing of the arts is a special branch of the discipline, devoted to such issues. My main point

is that, in performing its normal task, marketing meets and respects a set of conditions implied in the meaning of poesis. The fact that these conditions are inherent to the quality, feelings and imagination of the poetic mood, justifies the inclusion of the poetic dimension among the characteristics of marketing.

The poetic conditions fulfilled by marketing are of three orders. Two are linked with the fundamental features of the discipline, the other with its functioning in the cultural context.

The first order has to do with the satisfaction of needs and wants. In the romantic climate, distant objects charged with unfulfilled wishes were the poetic bridge between dreams and reality (Ebers 1985). In contemporary society, what is at issue is an intricate web of stimuli, signs and relationships. In discussing the Diderot effect we have seen the role of objects as bundles of meaning. The same, and more, could be said about the act of buying and selling as such. In selling, people exercise their ingenuity, and learn about other people. In buying, they assert themselves, they turn their thoughts loose, they build their own environments. All this calls into the picture the poetic dimension of marketing.

The second order of conditions originates from the nature of exchange. Exchange is communication. This is the opposite of silence, which Brown (1966) sees as the beginning of murder. Of course, silence and solitude can also have a strong poetic flare. Brown, who is a psychoanalyst, speaks of silence in terms of introversion, refusal, unwillingness or incapacity to recognize the other, narcissism, self punishment. Exchange and communication are antithetic to all this. Marketing transactions are embedded in an atmosphere of movement and participation, which can well be seen as a poetic expression of life.

The third reason why marketing can be considered a locus of poetic expression is related to the style of its own activity. Marketing is the product of business and society. At present it is

concerned the efforts that companies make to sell more, as well as with society's search for new ways to live better. Marketing performs its missions with apparent conspicuousness, but with substantial unpretentiousness. It has no great ideologies, no heroes to portray, no plans to offer for the salvation of mankind. It can be loud, invasive, sometimes aggressive. But its game—transactions—is based on consensus. Its reference point is the market place, which is far from being perfect. Still, it is the most efficient mechanism devised up to now. Marketers work in and for the market place. Most of them do so empirically, by trial and error. Some follow scientific patterns. Misjudgements, errors and doubts are, and will be, present in both groups. None of them is committed to dogmatic certainties, less so to the kind of total knowledge and cold rationality that would make life unbearable, if not obscene. Baudrillard (1986) puts it beautifully: "Obscenity begins when there is no more spectacle, no more stage, no more theatre, no more illusions, when everything becomes immediately transparent, visible, exposed in the raw and inexorable light of information and communication". Yes, marketers operate in terms of information and communication. But their light is not "raw and inexorable". Their job is eclectic and playful. They try to understand what people want, and to furnish them with what they want. In doing so, they recognise the role of behaviour and values, including personal sentiments and social aspirations. In fact, they do more than recognise them. Just as carpenters work with wood and bricklayers with bricks, marketers work with behaviours and values. They work with the poetic dimension of marketing.

Conclusion

Oskar Lange, the economist, used to tell his students that, in writing a paper, they had to think they were sending a telegram - paid for by themselves. If I have not followed his instruction insofar, I shall at least do so at the end of this long voyage among facts, ideas and speculations on the hidden dimensions

of marketing. All I still want to do is to ask a question and to express a wish.

The question is the following: given the profile of marketing that emerges from our discussion, is marketing still marketing, or have the winds of change blown so strongly that the foundations of the edifice must be re-established, and the building restored? My answer is that marketing is still marketing. The urge to satisfy consumer needs and wants, and to do so through exchange, is greater than ever. In this sense, the foundations of the edifice are still solid. The whole building, however, must be seriously restored, if not rebuilt. The composition of human wishes and wants, and the variety of their expressions and combinations, as well as the ways and means by which transactions take place, have changed profoundly. The kind of marketing edifice required by post-industrial societies would not be recognized by members of previous societies. The rules of the game are different.

The previous rules followed the principles of Aristotelian logic, based on the true/false dichotomy. Economic and social events unfolded within relatively stable structures. For marketing, this meant working along sequential steps of strategy and tactical moves, aimed at optimizing product-market relationships. The rules of the game were understood and accepted.

The new rules of the game are neither fully understood nor completely accepted. Events take place in dynamic structures, which involve simultaneous, multidimensional, polisemic criteria and applications of knowledge and imagination. In non-Aristotelian logic, as well as in the real-life context of future-oriented societies, the central issue is possible/not possible. The domain of possibilities is immense: "Everything behaves as if" (Einstein 1905). Both terms of the new dichotomy spell opportunities and threats. In marketing we often hear that threats can be transformed into opportunities. The task involves authentic innovation. It implies integrity, intelligence, creativity,

competence and dedication. There may be uncertainties, standstills, set-backs, recessions. But for students of marketing and for marketers the effort is expected to be rewarding in terms of scientific interest and professional achievements. It is also expected to be challenging for them as members of a community committed to economic, social and cultural improvement. In the new scenario both marketing management and marketing research are not a mature industry. They are an infant industry with a bright perspective.

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des Geistes befriedigen (for most things, the origin of value stems from the fact that they satisfy spiritual needs)

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